

VZCZCXRO1295
OO RUEHIK
DE RUEHSF #0635 3101452
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 061452Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6458
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SOFIA 000635

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR/CE TKONDITI, OES/IHB DWINN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#)
PINR, AMGT, TF, ECON, EINV, PGOV, SOCI, AMED, BU
SUBJECT: BULGARIA TO DECLARE NON-SPECIFIC FLU EPIDEMIC

¶1. (SBU) Bulgaria is expected to announce a national flu epidemic on November 6. According to the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan, a national epidemic is declared once the rate of illness across the country reaches 200 in 10,000 persons. Currently, there are 15 regions and municipalities, including Sofia, which have reached or surpassed this rate. In general, Bulgarian media do not differentiate between H1N1 and the seasonal flu. While it appears an estimated 100,000 Bulgarians currently have the flu, experts recognize the vast majority are suffering from the seasonal variety, not H1N1. So far, there are 227 confirmed H1N1 cases and five deaths.

¶2. (SBU) Bulgarian media reports about H1N1 have created public anxiety, causing many parents to take their children out of school for fear of infection. Classes have been suspended at 763 schools country-wide due to student absentees. According to the Ministry of Health, public schools are required to temporarily close when absentee rates hit 30 percent.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: A national flu epidemic is declared every year in Bulgaria due to the large number of individuals that contract the virus. The announcement this year comes earlier than past years, however. This, combined with the exaggerated news reporting, is causing an over-reaction to what is, so far, not a particularly bad flu season. End Comment.
ORDWAY